Study on Case-based Teaching Approach in MTCSOL

Hong ZHOU\(^1\), a, Dan-Dan LI\(^1\), b

\(^1\)College of International Exchange, Bohai University, Jinzhou, Liaoning, China

aZhouhong8163@163.com, b564213286@qq.com

Keywords: MTCSOL, Case-based Teaching Approach, Students’ Role, Patterns.

Abstract. MTCSOL (Masters of Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages) is a professional degree, which needs much training on what to teach and how to teach. With the special feature as the teaching situation appearing around the world, a large amount of cases are employed in order to achieve this educational objective. According to its own features in MTCSOL, case-based teaching demonstrate in its own patterns, like classroom observation, plan-based case teaching and simulating case teaching as well as problem sharing, which work effectively for the training of MTCSOL students, whose capability of problem identifying, problem posing, problem analyzing and problem solving.

Introduction

Case-based teaching approach, an important teaching mode, was put forward by Harvard Business School and applied in its MBA education for the first time in 1920s. This teaching mode was introduced to China in 1980s, which was widely used in quite a lot of subjects, and especially in professional education. The experiences from practice-orientated education show that the case-based teaching, focusing on teachers’ illustrating, and students discussing and being involved in real cases, is an effective method to develop the students’ practical capability, creativity and problem-solving ability.

MTCSOL is a professional degree, sort of pre-training for those teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages, who will be granted master degree of teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages, emphasizing greatly practical ability of teaching. This professional degree offers one-year courses study, and one-year practice and academic dissertation.

During MTCSOL training process, case-based teaching proves to be a most workable teaching method. In fact, this teaching approach also works well for training new teachers and would-be teachers, as well as experienced teachers.

The Brief Introduction to Case-based Teaching Approach

Case-based teaching is a student-centered, highly interactive pedagogy, turning classroom teaching into a collective search for analysis and solution to specific problems in real-life cases. [1]

With this approach, students can develop skills in analytical thinking and reflective judgment through reading, discussing and analyzing cases.

This approach is quite different from the examples used in classroom teaching by teachers. In traditional teaching, the teachers usually give some examples in order to get students to understand completely and stimulate them to think. The following are the differences between examples and real-life cases. [2]

\textbf{Length:} Examples are short while cases are long with more details.

\textbf{Structure:} Examples are simple while cases are complicated. Cases are supposed to demonstrate the beginning, development process and ending thoroughly and completely. In addition, they also need to get the cause analysis and impact involved.

\textbf{Content:} Examples give general information while cases need to provide details so that they can restore what really happened in the story.
Purpose: Examples are used just to explain some theory while cases are needed to get students fully involved in classroom study and practical capability training.

In conclusion, case-based teaching approach can help MTCSOL students improve their sensitivity in identifying problems related teaching, the ability of analyzing teaching problems scientifically and the creativity in solving teaching problems so that their reflective teaching capability can be developed and improved greatly. At the same time, case-based teaching approach can contribute a lot to the improvement of their ability of dealing with complex teaching problems since the real-life cases can demonstrate much better the complexity of the real-life teaching problems. Moreover, the training seems to be more specific since they are exposed to huge amount of problems and challenges in Chinese teaching in the world while studying those real-life cases. In dealing with real-life cases, MTCSOL students are fully involved in case reading, and then analyzing and discussing among group members or groups so that it truly achieve the purpose of learning by doing.

The Roles Played by Students in Case-based Teaching

The current educational idea holds that class is supposed to be student-centered, which means students need to be actively involved in learning. And case-based teaching just makes it possible. In encountering cases process, MTCSOL students really work as different roles.

Students’ Role as Experience Gatherer

Real-life cases can make more real-life teaching problems available for MTCSOL students. Generally speaking, what worries new teachers is that they are short of teaching experience. As a language teacher, the experience, which can give them more confidence, seems to be more helpful and more important. Therefore in case-based teaching process, students, first of all, put themselves into the real teaching situation which can help them to accumulate more and more experiences by getting to know what the others do in it.[3]

Students’ Role as Co-worker

Additionally, case-based teaching approach provides much more opportunities for MTCSOL students to work together with their study partners. The kind of interaction puts students into discussion and communication again and again to exchange ideas so that more new ideas can be produced. In this sense, this approach is much more productive, working out more than just for knowing one teaching problem, getting one solution and so on.

Students’ Role as Problem Identifier

What’s more, MTCSOL students’ problem awareness can be heightened. In case-based teaching process, students are not just watching, but to identify problems while studying and analyzing the cases in order to gradually make them clear.

Students’ Role as Knowledge Constructor

MTCSOL students also have to learn more knowledge by solving case problems. Case-reading can not at once improve their teaching ability. In order to truly solve the problems, they need to study some theories by searching more articles and books. Hence, this process forces students to connect their knowledge of theories with the need for critical decisions and evaluative skills.[4]

Students’ Role as Idea Producer

What is best about case-based teaching approach is that it can encourage MTCSOL students to reflect. Only through reflection can they get some ideas and understanding reasoned and then may develop some new ones.

The teacher’s role also changes in case-based teaching process. Traditionally, teachers talk more while by employing case-based teaching, they guide students to read cases or watch video cases and
ask questions to stimulate deeply thinking. Usually teachers are supposed to encourage students to find different answers.

**The Demonstrating Patterns of Case-based Teaching Approach**

How case-based teaching approach is operated in MTCSOL training provides a different pattern from MBA class, which usually starts with case reading, discussing and summarizing. While case-based teaching in MTCSOL class operates in different ways according to the type of cases used in class. Generally speaking, some cases can be shown by means of video so that they can be demonstrated with more details; and some cases can be shown by means of simulating case teaching where MTCSOL students are involved by playing roles as students in order to gain real feeling so that they can justify what they have got from the previous discussion of the cases.

The following are the four patterns operated in MTCSOL training: classroom observation, plan-based case teaching, simulating case teaching, and problem-sharing.

**Classroom Observation**

Classroom observation is a common method used to train teachers. But it is not so easy for MTCSOL students to observe the class since international Chinese teaching appears in different places around the world. In order to provide students with similar opportunity, video cases can be prepared presenting what is happening in real Chinese classes.

Good observation can be generated by the kinds of questions that a teacher asks to make sure that all the angles of the cases are considered. While observing, MTCSOL students should be required to take notes about what they see and what they feel. After observing, the teacher poses more instructional questions for them to discuss within groups. When the teacher makes final comment and conclusion, some parts of the video case can be repeated for more attention.

For this, the case-based learning procedure can be concluded as observing, note-taking, case analysis, comment-making and conclusion. During this procedure, note-taking and case-analysis are the two key parts, through which, MTCSOL students can not only gain related knowledge, but also learn how to make classroom observation.

**Plan-based Case Teaching**

In order to get students fully involved in the case study, tasks can be designed for MTCSOL students to fulfill, through which students can actively participate in the study of cases by making a plan to accomplish the task.

This approach is quite different from traditional case-based teaching approach in that plan-based case teaching doesn’t need to present cases to students first but to prepare well designed tasks for students to make plan to complete. The plan is supposed to make with group members and then the group reports it to the class, answer questions from other groups and present more explanation. When all groups finish talking about their own plans, the class begin to read the real-life case, which helps the students make comparison between their own plans and that in the case by analyzing why and how well the activities and arrangement are made in the case. Based on this analysis, students go on to find out how to make changes to improve their own plans.

The plan-based case teaching approach can follow the order of task design, plan to make, question to reply, case reading, comparison to make, case analysis, further improvement and summary. Among those steps, plan to make, question to reply, and comparison can be regarded as the most important parts since they provide more interactive discussion, which exercise and develop students’ skills in public speaking and problem solving as well as critical thinking by comparing. [5]

**Simulating Case Teaching**

Simulating case teaching is an effective teaching method to train new teachers by putting them directly into the shoes of characters to make the case, in particular the role-plays more realistic.[6] In stimulating case teaching both the teacher and the students play the roles in the case, teacher as teacher, students as students. By playing the roles as students, MTCSOL students can truly
understand what real learners think about different class activities so that they know how to organize classroom activities to meet the learner’s needs, which all at last can turn into their own experience in arranging classroom activities.

This case teaching mode goes in the order of role playing the case, reflection, discussion, and summary, among which, role playing and reflection can be regarded as the most important parts, delineating their own perspectives and personal circumstances well enough to enable students to understand the characters’ experience of the case. [7]

**Problem-sharing**

Problem-sharing is another pattern of case teaching, more helpful because those who have experienced in Chinese teaching will be invited in training MTCSOL. With this, the prepared cases are not needed, for those guest teachers will speak out their own stories, which can be used as cases. Then they can use the problems reflected from the stories to discuss and to find out solution.

The approach can follow the steps including story telling, questions posing, problem clarifying, solution finding, and summarizing. As real participants in the cases, the guest teachers can show MTCSOL students face to face what they encounter in teaching, which is helpful to lead the students to identify problems, so to develop problem awareness.

**Conclusion**

MTCSOL, as a professional degree, has formed its own teaching and training style, focusing on fostering those professional Chinese teachers faced with various kinds of teaching problems. Case-based teaching approach has proved to be effective in training MBA students, so it is introduced in training MTCSOL students to develop their problem analyzing and solving capability and help them accumulate experiences in teaching Chinese. Of course, this teaching approach has to adapt itself to the real situations in MTCSOL training. By placing students in real situations, case studies teach MTCSOL students how to teach themselves and others.

**Acknowledgement**

This paper is financially supported by Bohai University for postgraduates teaching reform project: Cases Construction of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language, 2016.

**References**


